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Temple Bay, Harris

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Excavation

In September 2011, a probable Mesolithic buried land surface and associated midden deposits was discovered at Temple Bay, Northton, Harris. The site is being actively eroded by the sea and is overlain by over 8 m of machair. It appears to be part of the same early to mid Holocene buried landscape that contains the Mesolithic dated site at Northton (Bishop et al, DES 2010 & 2011). The deposits include an old ground surface of up to 0.1 m in depth that is overlain by shell and ash rich midden deposits up to 0.2 m deep. Approximately 4m of deposits were exposed along the coastal erosion section. The section was drawn, photographed and geo-referenced using GPS, before bulk samples were taken for laboratory analysis. Initial results have shown that the deposits contain abundant ecofacts of hazelnut, charcoal, shell, fish and animal bone, including a red deer antler tine, hare and bird bones. A few flint and quartz worked lithics were also recovered. No evidence of any domestic animal or plant species or pottery was recovered. Radiocarbon dates on hazelnut fragments will be obtained to test the proposed Mesolithic date for the site.

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